

Assembly Committee on Education September 25, 2007 Testimony for Assembly Bill 482

Thank you Chairman Davis and Members of the Assembly Committee on Education for holding a public hearing on AB 482, which prohibits Milwaukee Public Schools from imposing residency requirements on teachers.

Recently, I was contacted by an enthusiastic young teacher who just moved up to Whitefish Bay from Illinois. Even though she and her husband live only a few blocks outside the City of Milwaukee, she was told she could not teach in MPS schools. When MPS is constantly struggling to find more good teachers, why are we arbitrarily limiting our options?

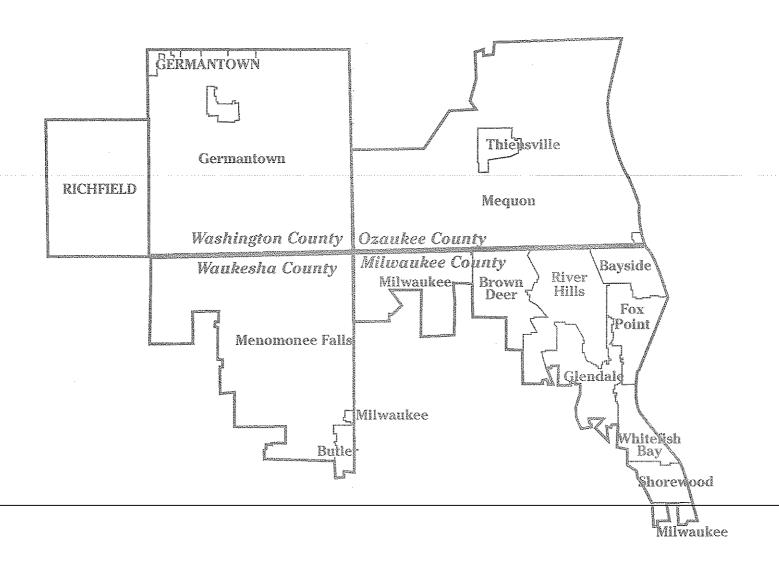
Only two of the nation's fifty largest school systems, Milwaukee and Chicago, require its teachers to live in the city. No other school district in Wisconsin has a residency requirement.

The MPS residency requirement is a <u>completely arbitrary</u> barrier that discourages quality educators from teaching at MPS. In a recent article in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, a 19-year MPS teacher says she has seen countless young teachers come and go from MPS because of one thing: the residency requirement. I will be submitting a copy of this article with my testimony. A June 2006 report from the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute goes into further detail about how the residency requirement is bad for teachers and students alike.

Attracting and retaining more quality teachers will improve student achievement at MPS schools. Getting rid of the residency rule is a simple (and free) first step.

I would be happy to answer any questions from committee members.

Wisconsin's 8th Senate District





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Ideals collide with frustrations

Educators react strongly to study citing Milwaukee in high turnover of young teachers

By ALAN J. BORSUK aborsuk@journalsentinel.com

Posted: June 25, 2007

Nicole Campeau is heading to Arizona after a year teaching in Milwaukee Public Schools for which, she says, no education program could have prepared her.

Jenni Gavin is staying as an MPS teacher after "the most rewarding and exhausting 2 1/2 years of my life."

Angie Hanick has worked in MPS for 19 years and says she has seen countless young teachers come and go because of one thing: The requirement that MPS teachers live in the city.

A national study released last week that used Milwaukee as a prime example of the problem of high turnover among teachers, especially early in their careers, brought strong reaction from several dozen current and former MPS teachers.

Some told of the frustrations and challenges of their work. Many criticized the residency rule, which has been in effect for MPS for almost 30 years. Almost all agreed that the report by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future was on target when it said that the high turnover of teachers was harming the overall quality of the work that goes on in Milwaukee's classrooms.

Almost all said the story of the idealistic, eager newcomer who doesn't last very long in the job is far too familiar.

Among the 50 largest school districts in the United States, MPS and Chicago Public Schools are the only two that require teachers to live in the city, according to a 2006 study by the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute.

Long an aggravation to many teachers - but with strong political support from city political leaders - the residency rule was the focal point of criticism from many teachers who responded.

Hanick said it had been tough on her in some ways to stay in the city, but she did it, in large part because

she works at "a wonderful school" - Maple Tree on the northwest side - and feels supported by her principal.

But she has seen this scenario unfold for many teachers:

"They get into MPS because they want a start. Then they realize they are starting families and will be forced to send their children to a school in Milwaukee unless they make other difficult arrangements to send them elsewhere or pay for a private school. Milwaukee is a tough community to live in with much crime and bad influences for our children. Do you think the young teachers want their children growing up in a neighborhood that is crime-ridden?"

So they move out of the city and take suburban teaching jobs or switch to pursuits other than teaching.

"I have taught with many excellent teachers who have left because of residency," said Diane Barbee, a first-grade teacher at Fletcher School on the far northwest side who has taught in MPS since 1985. "Luckily, my husband and I were able to find an awesome neighborhood filled with new friends and children. If I hadn't been so lucky, I don't know if I would have stayed. I think the residency rule is a huge factor in quality teachers leaving the district."

Other frustrations

But other teachers cited frustrations more directly related to schools and classrooms as the main reason they left MPS.

Put Campeau at the top of that list. A Milwaukee native who graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, she had a bad year, primarily working at La Follette School on the north side as a first-grade teacher who also had some 5-year-old kindergarten students.

"I was not given my 'new teacher' mentor until January, and was given no support" from school administration, Campeau wrote in an e-mail. "As a new teacher in MPS, I felt as though I had gone into the wrong profession."

The national study listed leadership of a school as a key factor in making or breaking new teachers, and Campeau said her experience fit that.

In an interview, she said that in the classroom, "I was a referee. I was breaking up fights constantly. I was doing little to no teaching."

"A lot of first-year teachers are so frustrated," she said, when asked about the experiences of others she knew. She said many had been told they would get support in launching their careers and ended up getting little.

'More than just teachers'

Gavin said she was sticking with her teaching job, despite the difficulties.

"The teachers that last where I teach are more than just teachers to our students," she wrote. "We are sometimes mom, tutor, cook, social worker, driver, mediator, confidante, and mentor. My students are members of my family. They stop by the house on the way to the park, go to the mall with us, or stop in for dinner. I have children call me at 8 p.m. because no one is home or no one is able to help them with

their algebra homework. . . .

"We hug our children and wipe their tears when they come to school the morning after their brother, sister, mother, or father was shot and killed the night before. When we are in lockdown because of a shooting across the street at lunch time, we are easing their fears about their younger sibling they think was on the playground when we started hearing the gunshots! This is what they forget to teach you about in college or tell you about in your interview."

She wrote, "There are two main reasons teachers quit - low pay for the hours worked and an unrealistic view of what teaching means. When I look at a new teacher coming in, I can immediately tell if they will last longer than the first quarter. The first thing my kids say to me when we have new staff is, 'Will this one leave us too?' Too often I think to myself, yes, but I won't."

Loretta Ocampo, a teacher for 10 years at Story School, 3815 W. Kilbourn Ave., said in an e-mail, "I am not sure how much longer I want to teach in MPS. I keep teaching what I am supposed to, no longer really having 'fun' with the kids, and test scores continue to prove us useless. Teachers are bashed in the media, the community doesn't value our services, and Central Services tells us to do more.

"How much more can one teacher do? Most of the time I am dealing with behavior problems that interrupt the learning environment. If there were a way to get rid of the students who are constantly interrupting class . . . we, teachers and students, could do better. In MPS you have to be strong and resourceful."

Marcus Wenzel, who has taught health and physical education at Bay View High School the past three years, is moving to a middle school on the southwest side this year.

"I stay in MPS because these are the students who need me the most," he wrote. "I like that they are challenging and genuinely appreciative of the hard work of their teachers."

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Esteemed Members of the Assembly Committee on Education,

I had hoped to present this in person, but unfortunately I am at home today caring for a sick toddler. I hope that you will accept this written statement in my place.

To be perfectly frank, I never set out to be a teacher. After serving in the United States Marine Corps, I entered college, eventually earning a Master's degree in Political Science. I studied abroad, mastered several languages, interned with a United States Senator and later at the United Nations. I was set on a career in politics, and doing everything I could to make it happen.

But life often takes turns we do not expect. While interning at the U.N., I helped support myself by working as a substitute teacher at an inner city Catholic school in Newark, New Jersey. It was the students at that school that encouraged me to pursue teaching as a career. I hope that they were moved by my passion; I know for a fact that I was moved by their desire to learn.

I went on to teach at several schools, first as a substitute and later as a member of the teaching staff. When my husband's career brought us

to the Milwaukee area, I quickly applied at Milwaukee Public Schools. I was thrilled when I was offered a staff position with the district. But that offer was quickly withdrawn when the recruiter realized I did not live in Milwaukee, but rather less than 3 miles from the city limit in nearby Whitefish Bay.

I was told that I would not be eligible for the position unless we were willing to sell our home and move within the Milwaukee city limits. When I asked why, I was told that the thinking was that teachers who live in the city are more invested in their students than those who would not. I found that puzzling.

I realize that MPS struggles with a high rate of teacher turnover. I believe the district needs qualified, passionate teachers- and a zip code shouldn't keep them from playing a part. The future of our state is directly tied to the quality of education we provide for Wisconsin's children. A line on a map shouldn't make a difference. Further, whenever I am entrusted with the education of others I am *personally* invested. I take their learning careers very seriously; their success is my success.

Wisconsin students need qualified teachers- no matter where they live. Let's give them what they need. You have the power to energize our schools, to provide them with new instructors and new ideas. I have faith that you, the elected leaders of my adopted state, will do the right thing for all our children.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Nicole M. Ford, M.A.

MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR RELATIONS

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September 25, 2007

Assembly Committee on Education Wisconsin State Assembly State Capitol Madison, WI 53708

Chair Rep. Davis and Committee Members:

RE: Opposition to Assembly Bill 482 - Prohibiting the Milwaukee Public Schools from Imposing Residency Requirements on Teachers

Milwaukee Public Schools opposes Assembly Bill 482, which would abolish MPS's residency requirements for teachers. This bill would overturn a board policy and a contractual provision that was collectively bargained with the teachers' union over 30 years ago. The teachers' union has sought unsuccessfully over the years to eliminate this bargained policy but has been unwilling to provide a quid pro quo that is acceptable to MPS or that an interest arbitrator has deemed reasonable. The residency policy is a major issue in the set of terms MPS bargains with its unions, as are other collectively bargained conditions of employment including but not limited to pension benefits and health benefits which should not be overturned by legislation. This bill would bypass the bargaining process altogether and give the teachers' union, unilaterally and with no bargaining give-and-take, what it has failed to obtain through negotiations. A residency rule is a mandatory subject of bargaining under the Municipal Employment Relations Act. MPS and the teachers' union are currently in negotiations and if the parties believe residency is an issue that should be addressed, the parties can do so in this context where the issue can receive the close attention to nuance and detail that such a major item deserves. MPS respectfully submits that this collective bargaining issue should be left to the bargaining process and not resolved legislatively in derogation of that process.

Related to the intrusiveness of the bill upon the collective bargaining process is its intrusiveness upon principles of local control (home rule). The MPS residency requirement implicates a wide number of policy considerations that are preeminently local in nature. MPS respectfully submits that such issues should properly be left in the hands of locally elected school directors who are closely in touch with the issues and directly accountable to taxpayers in the City of Milwaukee. The MPS Board has not consented to elimination of the residency policy to date despite, as noted, efforts over the years by the teachers' union to abolish it. This bill would effectively divest the Board, and the Milwaukee electorate, of any say over a matter that has profound

implications for MPS, the City, and everyone living in the City. Some of these implications are worth noting.

The experience of similarly sized Midwestern cities that do not have teacher residency requirements, a poll of MTEA teachers taken in the mid-1990s, and MPS's own experience with teachers who were not subject to the residency policy in earlier years (when many teachers were exempt from the policy because they lived out of the City when it became effective), all suggest a very strong likelihood that that thousands (well over half) of the teachers employed by MPS would move out of the City of Milwaukee if the residency requirement is eliminated. The potential loss of thousands of teacher/residents through elimination of the residency significantly exacerbate declining population, requirement would employment and income trends. MPS as a whole is struggling financiallyit has eliminated approximately 1000 positions over the past five years in an attempt to cope with its financial difficulties. An exodus of potentially thousands of teachers from the City to the suburbs and beyond will only amplify these problems. City of Milwaukee employment and income trends that are already poor as compared with the surrounding metropolitan area, could be exacerbated by this bill's provisions.

Perhaps most importantly, elimination of residency for teachers would significantly increase the likelihood that other groups (all employees working for MPS must reside in the City) could successfully eliminate residency requirements through the collective bargaining process: MPS has total employment of approximately 14,000 employees. The same provision has been collectively bargained with all of the represented employees of MPS (except substitute teachers). If rates of migration out of the City by other groups even marginally approximated levels likely to occur with teachers, all of the adverse effects upon MPS and possibly the City noted in the foregoing would be significantly enhanced.

An argument put forward in favor of eliminating residency is that it precludes MPS from "attracting and retaining" good teachers. argument folds under minimal scrutiny. First, MPS is having no difficulty hiring teachers except in areas that all large and many small districts struggle with such as special education; in fact, the number of teachers hired per year is down considerably as compared with five or ten years ago. MPS currently recruits nationally for teachers. There are a great many highly qualified teachers graduating from colleges locally and nationally and many of these are eager to accept the challenges of working in a large urban school district. Second, very few teachers give residency as a reason for leaving MPS. One recent study showed that only around five percent give this as a reason for leaving: residency simply is not a significant problem with respect to attracting or retaining good teachers. Third, MPS teacher turnover rates compare very favorably with national turnover rates, and are comparable with turnover rates for large urban areas that do not have residency requirements. These facts all support a single conclusion: if the MPS residency rule were abolished, the impact upon recruitment and retention would be de minimus. challenges posed to recruiting the best teachers for MPS , similar to those faced by other large urban school districts are currently being studied and addressed.

For all of the above reasons MPS urges the committee to reject AB 482.

Thank you for considering these comments and concerns.

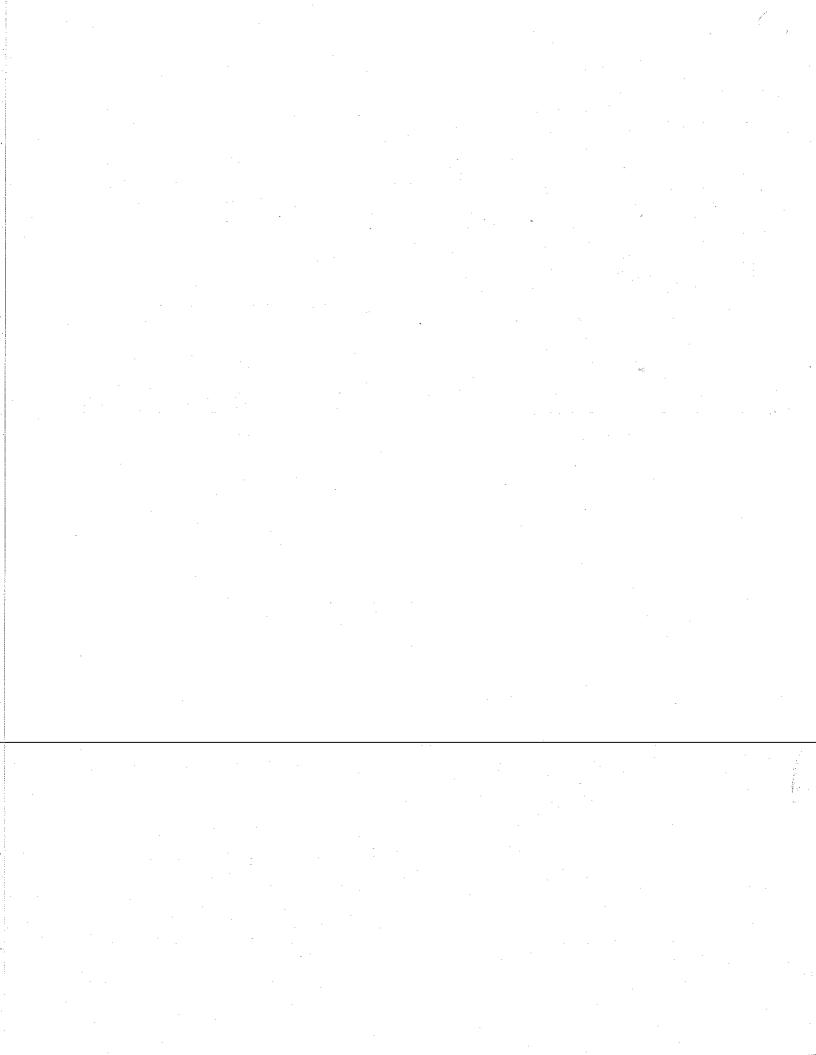
Sincerely,

THÉRESE M. FREIBÉRG

Director

Division of Labor Relations

TMF/nc 9/25/07



Testimony by Debbie Karow, special education teacher Craig Montessori School, Milwaukee Public Schools

Assembly Committee on Education AB482
September 25, 2007

Thank you for allowing me to testify in support of Assembly Bill 482. I was born and raised in the City of Milwaukee. My father was a City of Milwaukee fire fighter. I've been a special education teacher in MPS for 15 years. I became a teacher because I enjoy working with children and wanted to make a difference in their lives.

I continue to live in Milwaukee; however, family obligations have changed for me. I'm also a caregiver to my Mother who is 80 years old. She is disabled from a stroke. She is homebound and lives with a caregiver and myself. She lives in a two bedroom with no room for expansion. (I sleep on the sofa.) She is private paying her caregiver and is running out of money. At the age of 80, she does not want to take out a mortgage on her home. I am also married and have an apartment.

I have been looking for a house in Milwaukee that would accommodate my mother's needs and allow my mother, her caregiver, my husband, and myself to live together. Unfortunately, I am having a difficult time finding a home in my price range with a wide hallway to accommodate my mother's wheelchair. In addition, my husband who is a mortgage broker has exhausted his job search in Milwaukee and is now looking in the Chicago area for a job in which he'd commute. I have found affordable and spacious homes in Oak Creek and Greenfield, but because of the Milwaukee residency requirement, these homes are not options for us.

At this time, MPS is having a difficult time attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers. We know that having highly qualified teachers in the classroom makes a difference. In certain areas, like special education, MPS has a great shortage of fully certified teachers. In talking to some of the teachers that have left the district, residency was a major factor. I know other teachers who didn't even apply in MPS due to the residency requirement. They didn't want to give up their homes. Others, with spouses who worked, wanted to live at a mid point so both spouses wouldn't have far to drive. Others simply didn't like requirements put on them.

Our goal should be to get the best and brightest teachers into classrooms in Milwaukee and we should strive to remove any barrier to that goal. To do so, helps our children, helps Milwaukee, and in the long run, helps our state.

It would behoove this committee to eliminate the 1978 residency requirement. Please support AB482.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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Peter Blewett, Ph.D.
President, Board of School Directors
District 6
2750 North 45th Street
Milwaukee; WI 53210

September 25, 2007

Chairman Representative Brett Davis Assembly Committee on Education 17 West Main Street, Room 401 Madison, WI 53703

Dear Chairman Davis and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to encourage your opposition to AB 482 that prohibits the Milwaukee Public Schools from imposing residency requirements on teachers.

Assembly bill 482 makes residency an issue of statewide concern, thereby removing home rule authority of the Milwaukee Public Schools. In addition, it appears to remove all issues related to residency from the collective bargaining process which would shift the balance of power between MPS and the unions. The effect of this bill is to deprive the district of significant bargaining flexibility in contract negotiations over a subject that originated in the bargaining process. At great cost to the district, the bill unilaterally changes the balance of power and the dynamics of a process that works. AB 482 would force MPS to take this issue of the bargaining table before negations begin without receiving anything in exchange for it.

As President of the Board of School Directors for the state's largest school district, my concern is the targeted intent of this legislation. I see no evidence of how this bill will assist teachers or support staff in better educating our children or making the city of Milwaukee a better place for families. Specifically, at a time when the majority of our families are struggling with the stresses of poverty and other societal issues, this bill would disrupt the tax base of the city further destabilizing the economic underpinnings of their community.

Committee members, please carefully consider the implications of this legislation and oppose AB 482.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide this testimony.

Sincerely,

eter T. Blewett

